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**STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN JOEL HEFLEY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY INSTALLATIONS AND FACILITIES
HEARING ON OVERSEAS QUALITY-OF-LIFE INFRASTRUCTURE**

April 8, 1997

This afternoon, the Subcommittee on Military Installations and Facilities meets to continue its examination of the living and working conditions confronting unaccompanied military personnel and military families and the adequacy of the plans of the military departments to address the serious shortfalls in housing and other facilities that directly affect the quality of life of soldiers, sailors, and airmen. This subcommittee has placed considerable emphasis on this issue and we will continue to do so. Today, we will take testimony from seven senior military officers charged with the responsibility to manage and maintain the Nation's investment in military facilities abroad. Frankly, some of the worst and seemingly intractable quality-of-life problems confronting the military services exist at our forward-deployed installations.

To some extent, the shortfalls are understandable. With the end of the Cold War, the investment by the Nation in its overseas installations dropped considerably as we reassessed force structure and the installations required to support the troops in the field. In its FY1990 budget request, the Department of Defense sought over \$933 million for military construction and military family housing requirements abroad, including \$316 million for quality-of-life infrastructure. Congress authorized only \$505 million for all overseas construction and \$200 million for quality-of-life facilities. Over the next few years, the budget request plummeted for overseas MILCON funding to the extent that the military departments combined requested less than \$70 million each year for quality-of-life improvements during a four year period between FY1992 and FY1995. With the erosion of MILCON funding came a similar erosion in funding for real property maintenance.

Due to the uncertainties of the drawdown in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, those resourcing decisions are understandable and were probably the right thing to do. The result, however, for those installations that have endured now that the drawdown is near an end has been the creation of a significant and serious infrastructure problem, especially in the area of housing

and community facilities. No one can read the prepared statements of our witnesses today and come away from that experience feeling good about the living conditions at many of our installations abroad.

I am proud to say that this subcommittee, on a bipartisan basis, has been willing to deal with these problems. Beginning in FY1995, the Congress began to authorize more funding for overseas quality-of-life enhancements than had been requested by the Administration. The ranking member of this subcommittee, Solomon Ortiz of Texas, was one of the leaders in the initiative undertaken by the House that year to provide new barracks for troops in Korea – the first MILCON funds provided to Eighth U.S. Army in five years. Over the last two years, we have worked to sustain the initiatives of this subcommittee to improve troop housing, family housing, and child development centers in Germany. But, the Congress should not be expected to be the sole provider for the forces abroad.

In that context, I am pleased to see that DOD has sought \$208 million for needed quality-of-life improvements abroad. At the same time, we need to ensure that every avenue for host nation support has been exhausted prior to committing increasingly scarce resources for military construction. Many of the host nations have provided funding for important operational, housing, and other U.S. requirements, even if not to the level that some would prefer. The bottom line, however, is how we provide for basic housing and other quality-of-life facilities for young Americans deployed abroad to execute the Nation's ability to defend its interests and preserve peace.

Last year, former Deputy Assistant Secretary for Economic Security, Robert Bayer, testified that "what we are asking of those people and the conditions that they are finding themselves in are pretty abysmal". Abysmal. While we have made progress recently, I doubt conditions have changed much in the last year. There are a number of very serious issues we need to address – the conditions in which military personnel and their families live, the adequacy of the plans of the military services to address their shortfalls, and the impact of current burdensharing initiatives and whether those initiatives can be expanded.

I want to welcome again our witnesses. They are literally in the front line of this problem and I hope we can develop a better understanding of the conditions in the field from their comments today.